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JAPAN

Feb. 8, 1954

BRITISH MAY HAVE RASTOVOROV IN CUSTODY

Tokyo, KYODO, in Japanese and English, Feb. 8, 1954, 0430 GMT--T

(Text)

Tokyo, Feb. 8. New speculation is now appearing among informed circles here that Yuri Rastovorov, missing member of the defunct Soviet mission, was held in custody by a British intelligence agency in Japan. These circles base their view on the following facts:

1--Rastovorov had intimate relations with several members of the British Embassy in Japan. One of them is of higher rank than U.S. Embassy officials with whom Rastovorov had been acquainted. Another British Embassy official, who recently transferred from Moscow to his Tokyo post, quickly became an intimate friend of Rastovorov.

2--On Jan. 25, the day following that on which the Soviet official disappeared, the Australian frigate Murchison dropped anchor in the port of Tokyo and stayed until Jan. 29. This points to the possibility that Rastovorov might have left Japan aboard the Australian warship.

3--When a member of the defunct Soviet mission here plans to return home, he must obtain a transit visa from the Hong Kong Government. This means that British authorities would be able to know about the return home of a Soviet mission member from Japan. Rastovorov applied for the visa Jan. 18 and was given it a week later. The 15-man Soviet team which participated in the recent world men's speed skating championships in Sapporo, Hokkaido, applied for a similar visa Jan. 19 and obtained it only 3 days later.

4--Britain is said to be superior to the United States in intelligence activities and gives better treatment to political refugees.

Meanwhile, police authorities are still continuing their search for the missing Soviet official, but, as of today, no trace has yet been found. At present the most probable assumption is that Rastovorov is under protective custody of his own will, as reported by various American-affiliated news agencies. However, U. S. authorities have neither confirmed nor denied this point. If Rastovorov has surrendered to U.S. authorities for asylum, the Japanese authorities have no means to ask that he be handed over since he is regarded as a political refugee according to international custom.

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
03-17-2009

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In the event Rastovorov leaves Japan, American authorities who hold him must apply for a passport from the Japanese Government in accordance with the U.S.-Japan Administrative Agreement and Immigration Control Law.

The police search for the missing Soviet official is also being conducted on the basis that he violated a special measure regarding crimes, set up in accordance with the Article 3 of the U.S.-Japan Administrative Agreement.

It has been made clear that Rastovorov had stolen secrets from the Johnson Air Base near Tokyo. Three Americans, including two soldiers, have offered Rastovorov secret military information. They have been sent back to the United States. A Japanese for whom the police are also searching is said to have acted as a courier for Rastovorov.

Meantime, police authorities have denied that influential Japanese politicians, including former Cabinet members, are involved in Rastovorov's espionage activities as recently reported by a foreign news agency.

Official U.S. Comment Asked

Tokyo, MAINICHI, in English, Feb. 8, 1954--T

(Front-page Editorial: "Cloak and Dagger")

(Text)

The week-old official "hush" on the Rastovorov case is deepening the suspicion on the part of the Japanese people that there is a super-secret intelligence service operating in Japan,

The United States of America has been known to us as a frank spokesman for what she calls the free world. We have been led to believe that secrecy and the "no comment" attitude were the monopoly of the Soviet Union. Such an understanding, however, now appears to be different, if not the reverse. The Soviet Union, through its representation in Japan, has formally charged American military intelligence services with being guilty of kidnaping the missing official. The expressed attitude of the highest diplomatic and military echelons of the United States is pregnant with mysterious elements. They are treating this problem as if it were an extremely fragile or a highly explosive issue. Official comments on this matter have never gone beyond the stage of "no comment" or "denial of knowledge."

On the other hand, competing American news agencies almost simultaneously reported that the man in question "probably" was in Okinawa, both quoting "authoritative sources."